

“When a Home Depot executive was told inventor Michael Powell might have a claim against the hardware giant for stealing an invention that keeps store employees safe, his reaction was swift and vulgar.

"(Expletive) Michael Powell," the executive said. "Let him sue us."

Recognizing it was a Goliath to Powell's David, the company sought to cut him out of any profit for the invention that saved the company millions in worker's compensation claims. In the year before the devices were installed, the company paid out \$1 million in claims related to injuries caused by the saw. In the year after the gadgets were installed, it paid out \$7,000.

The crass response typifies the company's attitude toward Powell, who crafted a simple, yet ingenious, way to keep Home Depot employees from slicing off their fingers while they're cutting wood for customers, a federal judge said Monday.

"Home Depot knew exactly what it was doing," U.S. District Judge Daniel Hurley said. "They simply pushed Mr. Powell away and they did it totally and completely for their own economic benefit."

Calling the company callous and arrogant, he ordered it to pay the former Boca Raton man \$3 million in punitive damages. That's on top of the \$15 million a jury in March said the company should pay him for stealing his so-called "Safe Hands" gadget that is now affixed to radial saws at nearly 2,000 Home Depots nationwide.

The damages for Home Depot don't end there. Hurley also ordered the firm to pay Powell's attorneys the \$2.8 million they say they are owed, and to pay Powell an estimated \$1 million in interest annually on the judgment. The interest began building in 2006 and will continue accruing until Home Depot pays up.

The roughly \$25 million judgment could have been avoided had the company agreed in 2004 to pay Powell the \$2,000 he offered to charge for each device. That bill would have come to \$4 million. [“\(1\)](#)

When you read a story like what happened to Mr. Powell, you have to wonder what type of company Home Depot is. Sometimes what one executive does to save money may also affect a company as a whole and the way it could be perceived. You can also view this same story and believe the company made a mistake, and is paying for it. How can this be the same company that donates millions a year to charitable causes and always be the first to help any major disaster? How can Home Depot help contribute to local communities and help these communities flourish?

Independent remodeling businesses are being increasingly squeezed by Home Depot. Having captured nearly half of all hardware and building supply sales nationally, the chain has expanded aggressively into installation services. What is particularly frustrating for independents is that mega-chains actually have substantially higher installation prices. “The customer is paying a significant premium,” said Sayre. Home Depot even admits as much. “We

will never win on pure price,” Frank Blake, the company’s executive vice-president of business development told the London-based Financial Times. “The person operating in the neighborhood just on his or her own will be able to win.” But people still assume that the big-boxes are less expensive. Home Depot also benefits from financing that allows customers no interest and no payments for six months to a year. Local installers have lost their big job to Home Depot, because even though their price was 20 percent lower, they are unable to finance the deal.

Now on the business side Home Depot is crushing the local independent contractor on installation and hurting the small business. This you would believe would hurt a local community on its economic growth, but this has the opposite effect. For the do-it-yourselfer Home Depot is there for you with its lower prices and trained employees. This is where it helps the local economy flourish. The more money a store generates the more employees the store will hire. This is the first boost to the local economy that is much needed. The next boost to an area is how committed Home Depot is to the local area on up keep.

Home Depot has about 300,000 people employed. With this many workers there are lots of committees within the company and at each individual store. Each store has a committee that is dedicated in helping the local community. Whether it is a local park or a needy family these are the committees that are the public face of Home Depot.

“Helping neighbors has quickly become a trademark of the Crawfordsville Home Depot. The store’s construction team, known as Team Depot, is now helping local veteran Roger Craig and his wife, Dellie. The assistance includes doing some home repairs and building a back door ramp to allow Roger to be more mobile. The project is a part of Home Depot’s national three-year effort to reach out to veterans.”[\(2\)](#)

Home Depot has taking the lead and making contributions to our wounded warriors. The Home Depot Foundation has committed \$80 million over five years to nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the homes of economically disadvantaged veterans.

Affordable housing for deserving families is at the heart of The Home Depot Foundation’s mission. Since 2002, The Home Depot Foundation has invested more than \$340 million in local communities to build and renovate homes for deserving families; transform local parks and playgrounds; and repair community facilities.

“When disaster strikes, communities look to The Home Depot, their associates and the Foundation for the supplies, resources and support needed to clean up, recover and rebuild their homes and neighborhoods.

Team Depot volunteers are often among the first on the scene to help government officials and nonprofits respond to the immediate needs of people in impacted areas, and they continue to partner with our neighbors when they are ready to rebuild.

In response to the immediate needs after Superstorm Sandy, the Foundation provided the following financial support and donation of supplies. • Team Rubicon - The Foundation continued its partnership with Team Rubicon, the disaster relief organization that unites the skills

and experiences of military veterans with medical professionals to rapidly deploy emergency response teams into crisis situations. The Foundation donated \$50,000 in gift cards and cash to Team Rubicon for clean-up and rebuilding efforts in the affected area.

- American Red Cross - \$250,000 for immediate disaster relief supplies and activities. This donation is in addition to the Foundation's annual gift of \$500,000 to the Red Cross' disaster giving program, bringing the company's total 2012 commitment to \$750,000. As part of this effort, The Home Depot provided the Red Cross with the following requested items for cleanup activities in New York and New Jersey:

- 5,000 metal/garden/stone/bow rakes
- 5,000 flat/transfer shovels
- 15,000 pairs of leather cowhide work gloves

- Operation Homefront – \$150,000 for Operation Homefront's Emergency Relief Fund that provides food, clothing and temporary shelter to military service members and their dependents in in the affected areas.

- States of New York and New Jersey - \$290,000 in supplies for immediate clean-up and recovery. Five truckloads of supplies were delivered to each state full of supplies, such as homer buckets, shovels, trash bags, flashlights and batteries.

- Store donations to nonprofit organizations, including the Salvation Army, Rockaway Waterfront Alliance, Keep Islip Clean, Operation Hope and many other local organizations - Nearly \$180,000

In addition, associates from The Home Depot volunteered their time and talents through Team Depot, the company's associate-led volunteer force, to help with rebuilding initiatives. Team Depot responded in a couple of the hardest hit areas and will continue their volunteer efforts. • In Staten Island, NY, 15 Team Depot volunteers joined residents and local nonprofits to clean up large debris left from the storm.

- In Brooklyn, NY, Team Depot partnered with the New York City Economic Development Corporation on a large clean-up effort on Saturday, November 10 in Coney Island and Far Rockaway.”[\(3\)](#)

The Homer Fund is a nonprofit charity created in 1999 in celebration of The Home Depot's 20th anniversary and the associates who have made the company so successful. From providing shelter after natural disaster strikes, to helping with the cost of burying a loved one, the Fund seeks to truly make a positive impact in the lives of our associates.

The Homer Fund consists of a large group of seven full-time associates. These associates' daily task is to take care of the 300,000 associates that make The Home Depot a success. The Fund also has a Management Committee which governs the guidelines of The Homer Fund.

Home Depot is there to also help employees in need and not be a burden on the city. More than \$1 million dollars are awarded to associates in need on a monthly basis. The Homer Fund receives almost 1,000 requests each month from associates who are not able to pay their basic living expenses due to an unexpected occurrence. These requests are processed promptly; generally, within three business days from the receipt of the request.

Since 1999, the Fund has provided more than \$66 million to over 55,000 associates in need of shelter, food, clothing and funeral expenses through its Direct and Matching Grant programs. Since 2006, the Orange Scholars Scholarship Program has awarded more than 4,500 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500 each to children of their associates.

Now like most companies you will find a bad story if you want to. There is nothing you can do no store is perfect but a good store can admit to mistakes and learn from them only to get better. I am sorry for what happened to Mr. Powell but he got his day in court to strike down the Goliath. Mr. Powell was the lucky one because I know there must be a hundred that did not get there day in court. When you look at all the good things Home Depot does for the local community you have to love this great company. First you must give it to them on their continued dedications to our wounded warriors. With \$80 million committed over five years to nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the homes of economically disadvantaged veterans. Our wounded soldiers most not be forgotten and Home Depot is making sure of that.

When a Disaster strike a small town Home Depot is there to help like in Joplin. The Home Depot Foundation gave \$1 million for relief, recovery and long-term rebuilding efforts in Joplin, Mo., which was ravaged by a deadly tornado.

"The devastation in Joplin is indescribable and we will be there to help this community get back on its feet," said Frank Blake, chairman and CEO of Home Depot in a statement. "As we learned through our work in the Gulf after similar destruction from Katrina, the rebuilding will take years, and we are committed to Joplin for the long haul. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of the residents of Joplin who are now struggling in the aftermath of this terrible storm."[\(4\)](#) This is the true feelings of a caring and giving company.

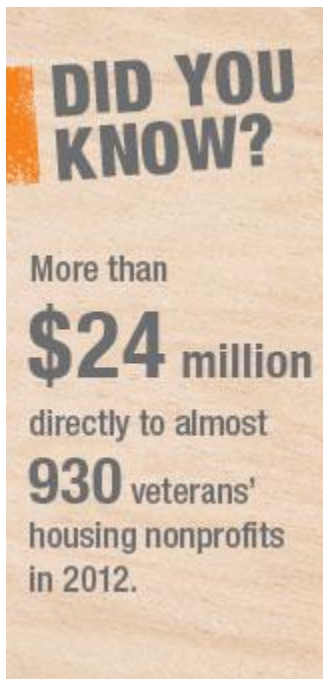
Now when it comes to their associates they are all in trying to give them the best. Employees are given the choice of getting insurance with the company at a reduced rate. They also have a great 401k and other benefits for their associates. "The Homer fund is there for associates though out the country, many who have benefited from direct or matching gifts. These range from a gal whose house burned down to a friend with stomach cancer, another with throat cancer, an associate whose 3 year old suffered a stroke during heart surgery, a diabetic associate who lost his leg to amputation , and another who lost her home in the spring flooding, and two funerals for unexpected deaths to the husband and teenage son of other associates."[\(5\)](#) The stories keep coming in on all the good that Home Depot has done. I can't see how home depot is not an economic asset. Home Depot might be an mega company but it does care about everyone around them.



Homer Foundation \$250,000



Aprons in Action



Home Depot Fact Checker





Welcome Home SFC Mark Allen



The Home Depot store involved in the Michael Powell lawsuit



The Front Entrance

- (1) Musgrave, Jane (Thursday, May 13, 2010) The Palm Beach Post  
<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/home-depot-called-arrogant-ordered-to-pay-ex-boca-/nL6xg/>
- (2) Cox, Bob (March 23, 2013) Journal Review  
[http://www.journalreview.com/news/article\\_a392bb7a-9349-11e2-abee-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.journalreview.com/news/article_a392bb7a-9349-11e2-abee-0019bb2963f4.html)
- (3) <http://www.homedepotfoundation.org/page/the-home-depot-foundation-responds-to-superstorm-sandy>
- (4) (May 24, 2011) Atlanta Business Chronicle  
<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2011/05/24/home-depot-gives-1m-to-joplin-aid.html>
- (5) The Homer Fund (December 2008) (<http://www.topix.com/forum/com/hd/TJ1REK GK8S9M2P21C>)